INTRODUCTION

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The conception spurring this publication into print began at the American Folklore Society Meeting in Portland, Oregon in the fall of 1974. Many panels there dealt exclusively with contemporary approaches to and uses of Native American folklore. There were five panels devoted to Native America and four additional presentations on other panels. Native American people were in the audiences and several presentations were given by Native Americans. Larry George, a Yakima Indian man, told a traditional folktale to a large, captivated audience and then went on to demonstrate a similar tale through the use of filmstrip and tape. Current films with emphasis upon Indian tradition were shown. Many folklorists fresh in from field experiences treated listeners to their findings. Yet with all the interest in the presentations as evidenced by heavy attendance, the great diversity of approaches and applications of Native American folklore had never, to my knowledge, been anthologized for a reading audience. This Bibliographic and Special Series issue of the Folklore Forum is an attempt to bring to the reader the thoughts of Native Americans concerning their traditions, the wide-ranging techniques now employed in Native American folklore analyses, the way in which traditions are being maintained by Native groups, the historic reconstruction possibilities for building oral histories and ethnohistories, and the ethnographic content one might glean from early works of history and literature of value to a folklorist. As one reads through this issue, he will find that each of these areas is treated in some detail.

The first article contributed by Beatrice Medicine discusses the importance of oral history for Native Americans. She focuses on the admissability of oral history by the American judicial system and brings in the "Consolidated Wounded Knee Cases." In these cases some oral historical evidence "stands undisputed," as she points out from the legal brief. Also maintaining a focus upon history, Raymond DeMallie discusses time concepts employed by the Teton Dakota and foundations needed in utilizing ethnohistory as a method for the historical reconstruction of a group. DeMallie posits the idea that many contemporary histories written by Native Americans about their past may intentionally ignore "our methods of scholarship." He sees this as a reaction to early scholars who "denied the possibility that Indians can say anything about their past." DeMallie goes on to build a methodology for research into the history of an ethnic group. He notes the importance of incorporating cultural understandings of the time concepts of Indian groups and cites how one might treat oral and recorded traditions to provide "the fullest possible context" for readers. Yet another article focusing upon history is that of Jack Frisch. He discusses the Iroquois Condolence Cane as an "idiosyncratic mnemonic device," its recent duplication and wide dissemination, and its function as an "artistic communication in small groups (Ben-Amos)." Frisch compares the contemporary folklore of the Condolence Cane to the "actual known history" behind its development and meaning.

The fourth article relies heavily upon interviews with Native Americans. There are five excerpts from interviews included to give Native American people a chance to express their concerns about the loss of their traditions, the younger generation's maintenance of remaining traditional practices, and their own personal beliefs concerning today's society compared to that of their youth. The article intends to display what some Indian "folk" believe about their past. One hears, for example, Moses George speaking about how his people originated here in the Americas. He does not believe his ancestors crossed a land bridge. A Chippewa man once suggested to me that all of the artifacts found by archeologists were planted as a humorous ploy by the Supreme Being. He found humor in the speculation surrounding the origin of Native Americans here. Along with the interviews, the "barrel of snakes" found within the "applied folklore" debate is opened slightly at the conclusion of the article. Here, the attempt is to build a case (through the Native Americans interviewed and the programs already in currency among Native Americans) for the value of tradition maintenance among ethnic groups. The folklorist, as the article emphasizes, is well-equipped to assist in this maintenance.

The next article by Claire Farrer relates many ethical considerations arising when one does fieldwork among Native Americans. In Custer Died For Your Sins (1969), Vine Deloria, Jr. devotes an entire chapter to the Native American perspective of anthropologists. The humorous caricature he draws in the chapter is no less true of a folklorist. Yet Farrer discusses how mutual respect can be developed with her informants. Along with a consideration of situations unique to doing fieldwork with Native Americans, she also discusses many fieldwork considerations one must contend with regardless of the ethnic group.

In the "Narrative Frame: Style and Personality in Tlingit Prose Narrative," Richard Daunenhauer focuses upon the narrative frame as a stylistic feature shared by all of the Tlingit storytellers he and his wife have dealt with while collecting. He labels the introductory and concluding frames as "a matrix in which the story proper is set." Dauenhauer feels the frame's function is "establishing the relationship of text, tradition bearer, and audience." He sees the narrative frame as an "emic" unit of Tlingit oral composition. Andrew Wiget discusses the "complex relationship between deep and surface structures" of folktale narration in his article. Wiget uses twenty-nine variants of the Eskimo tale where several girls wed non-human husbands to demonstrate how one might bring together narrative units from the most minute detail to the episode by showing their structural relationships to each other.

In the eighth article, R.W. Reising treats the reader to the myth and reality of Jim Thorpe, one of America's most acclaimed athletes of the century. Reising sees Jim Thorpe's prowess being exaggerated at times as a "conscience-soothing" device for Americans still troubled by early American treatment of the American Indian and Thorpe's loss of the awards at the Olympics after winning both the pentathlon and decathlon. Further evidences of oral and written exaggerations of Jim Thorpe's achievements further the assertion. Reising points to a statement written by D.H. Lawrence concerning American feelings of ambivalence toward the American Indian: the need to both "extirpate" and "glorify" him.

Reising sees Jim Thorpe as an outlet for Americans to fuse fiction with fact in order to glorify a man and "create a conscience-soothing hero of epic dimensions." In the following article, Alf Walle uses three works of literature to show how a changing consciousness of Indian problems in adapting to dominant society can be found in three novels.

In the last article, Thomas Johnston shares some of his findings from a study of both the social and psychological implications of musical performance among indigenous Alaskan Native Americans. Johnston thinks that musical change among Native American groups in Alaska will change function before form. The function may become more and more a "demonstration of ethnicity" rather than fulfilling the religious functions of the past. However, the form may remain basically unadulterated in the process.

As one reads through these articles, I'm sure he will be impressed by the range of the subject matter treated and the range of approaches used in dealing with Native American folklore. As an outgrowth of this B & SS, the reader will hopefully grow in appreciation of Native American culture. As Moses George states in the fourth article, we can give "a pat on Indian civilization's back."